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FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT SECTION

444-6646

Volume 20

June 1985

AGENCIES WORK FOR FLOOD HAZARD MITIGATION

Flooding is a recurring hazard to life and property. In 1980 a comprehensive approach to flood hazard mitigation (or relief) was begun under a directive from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Thirteen federal agencies entered into the Interagency Agreement for Nonstructural Damage Reduction Measures. The agreement ensures that all federal agencies providing construction funds and long-term recovery aid should work cooperatively. Its objectives include the use of nonstructural measures whenever possible. Significant savings can be achieved by incorporating into the recovery process mitigation measures that will lessen the impact of future floods.

The Interagency Hazard Mitigation Team created under the Interagency Agreement is activated upon presidential declaration of a flood disaster. In May 1981 ten counties in west-central Montana were declared a flood disaster area by President Reagan. It was one of the first times the Team was activated under the OMB directive.

The Interagency Agreement requires the publication of two reports, one within 15 days of the presidential disaster declaration and the second 90 days later. The 15-day report should provide an overall plan for the hazard mitigation and disaster recovery activities of the agencies that are party to the agreement. The 90-day report identifies progress made in implementing the plan, describes problems or issues that have developed and recommends future actions.

Although the OMB order was directed toward federal agencies involved in the post-flood recovery process, state and local governments are encouraged to participate in the activities of the Hazard Mitigation Team. In fact, their involvement and active participation is imperative.

The team identifies programs that are available at any level of government—federal, state or local—that can assist in the post-flood recovery process. In the past, taxpayers' dollars have been spent time after time for repeated restoration of flood damaged properties. The Hazard Mitigation Team concept is designed to implement measures to prevent repeated damage.

406 HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

When the governor requests the president for declaration of a flood disaster, it is agreed that the state will prepare a Hazard Mitigation Plan under Section 406 of Public Law 93-288, the Federal Disaster Relief Act, as a condition for receipt of federal disaster assistance. The governor appoints a hazard mitigation coordinator to prepare the report. The 406 Hazard Mitigation Plan makes recommendations for state-wide implementation of measures to lessen the impact of future disasters.

Upon the next request for a disaster declaration, FEMA will review the state's 406 Plan. The governor makes a request to the president or a disaster declaration when the damages exceed the response capabilities of local and state governments. FEMA assesses the situation and makes a recommendation to the president regarding the declaration. The adequacy of the 406 Plan and the success of implementing its recommendations will be considered before FEMA recommends that the president declare a disaster.

FLOODPLAIN ISSUE RESOLVED IN COURT

Ravalli County's floodplain regulations and permit requirements were upheld in a recent decision by District Court Justice John Henson involving lawsuits between the county, and developers and lot owners of a subdivision near Stevensville. Apparently, the developers told those who bought lots that no building or sewage permits were required from the county.



A house was constructed and a septic system installed within the 100-year floodplain of the Bitterroot River. The settlement, which affects three related suits, requires that the house and sewage system be moved to a lot out of the floodplain. A new lot outside of the floodplain is to be provided by the developers for the people who built the house. In addition, several people are to be reimbursed for purchases of lots in the floodplain.

Ravalli County's floodplain regulations, which are consistent with state and federal standards, prohibit individual sewage disposal systems for newly created subdivisions and require permits for new construction within the floodplain. New houses must be built so that the lowest floor is at least two feet above the elevation of the 100-year frequency flood. Sewage must be disposed of outside the floodplain.

BIENNIAL REPORTS

FEMA has recently requested that communities participating in the NFIP submit biennial reports regarding activity in floodplains. This is a reminder to get the reports in if you have not already done so.

Communities that have had floodplains and/or floodways designated by the Board of Natural Resources and Conservation pursuant to Title 76-Chapter 5 MCA should submit to DNRC copies of floodplain development permits that have been granted.

QUESTIONNAIRE

We would like to thank those of you who responded to our questionnaire in the last issue of High Water. Your comments were especially appreciated. If you haven't had a chance to respond, please do so. We'd like to know your opinions.

TIM POOL RESIGNS

Tim Pool has recently resigned as the State Assistance Program Manager and has accepted a position with the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Tim contributed a great deal toward flood hazard mitigation awareness in Montana. We wish him good luck in his new job.



Deeda Richard, a DNRC water rights employee, has been hired to fill the position created by Tim's resignation. Deeda has a bachelor's degree in natural resources with a specialization in environmental education. She has worked in the Conservation District Division and Water Rights Bureau for six years.

Floodplain Management Section Staff:

John Hamill, Supervisor
Cindy Forgey, Secretary/Clerk
Deeda Richard, Coordinator, NFIP